

Forum Empowers Women Attorneys on the Rise

The Norris McLaughlin & Marcus Women's Forum has approximately 30 women attorneys, and is growing larger as word spreads about its activities and charitable efforts.

By PHIL SONNEMA
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Photo: Guy Brown, G H Brown Communications

COMPRISED OF APPROXIMATELY 30 WOMEN attorneys, the Norris McLaughlin & Marcus Women's Forum flourished in its inaugural year in 2007. Formed to promote the advancement of all women, the Forum hosted, attended and sponsored various activities geared toward women professionals in leadership roles. Success breeds success, as they say, and the NMM Women's Forum is poised for even greater achievements in 2008.

The NMM Women's Forum found its start not long after a luncheon sponsored by the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) in 2006. A number of women attorneys from Norris McLaughlin & Marcus attended the event, and were struck by the ideas presented by the speakers at the luncheon—particularly advancing each firm's women and better methods for women attorneys to market themselves. They reflected on these concepts in-depth during the ride home.

Karen Thompson, a senior member of NMM and an attendee at the NAWL event, discussed the establishment of a women's initiative with the NMM Marketing Partner, Joel Jacobson, and found support within the firm. A September 2006 meeting with all the women at NMM (chaired by Thompson) to assess interest in such a program was met with overwhelming enthusiasm. Chief Marketing Officer Edward Miller, who liked the concept from the start, was instrumental in helping to fashion the Forum and get it off the ground. "Any firm that does not support and nurture the success of a large segment of the firm cannot be successful in a competitive marketplace," Miller tells *COMMERCE*.

Recognizing the importance of establishing reciprocal relationships between female professional colleagues, the Forum hosts charitable, social and educational events to link women in business and law. "The Forum has provided me with a network of successful female partners whose insight, skills and knowledge of the practice of law is invaluable to a young attorney's growth," says Deanna L. Koestel, an NMM associate and a member of

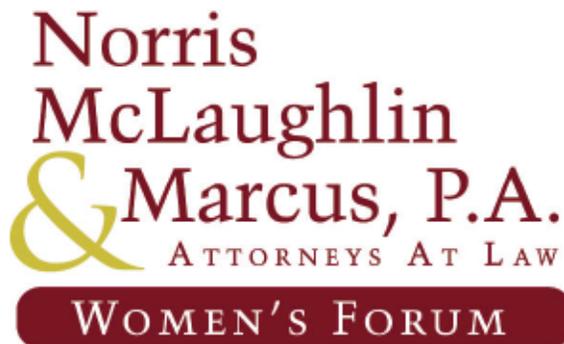
the Forum's Marketing Committee. "Furthermore, the Forum has created the opportunity to create relationships and promote business with other female leaders throughout New Jersey and New York." The Forum already has a large network of affiliates, with connections to organizations ranging from the Women Presidents' Organization to the Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity.

Even though the group is just in its second year, the NMM Women's Forum is structured for long-term success. Forum subcommittees—including education, marketing, and charitable events—consider programs to present and select worthy charities to support. Many of the sponsored events are selected through its members' connections. For example, June 2007's "Girls on the Run" benefit—which trained more than 500 girls in Somerset County for their first 5K run—was introduced by Koestel, who had previously participated in the program.

Programs under consideration for 2008 include a client appreciation event, informational sessions for current and prospective clients on substantive legal issues and an advanced marketing seminar for Forum members. "Internally at the firm, there is excitement about working with an outside consultant to refine our marketing skills," states firm and Education Committee member Haekyoung Suh. "When time is tight, tips on how to market effectively are always welcomed," she says.

The flagship event for the NMM Women's Forum appears to be its Fall Festival of the Arts, a cocktail reception and auction that debuted last October. "Last year's event was a success, as we raised almost \$20,000 for the benefit of Somerset County's Resource Center for Women and Their Families and the Lung Cancer Circle of Hope," says Christine D. Socha, an NMM associate and a member of Forum's Charitable Event Committee. "It was a wonderful evening of networking and socializing, and I am looking forward to this year's event being even better!" ■

For more information on the NMM Women's Forum, please visit www.nmmlaw.com.



The mission of the **Women's Forum** is to promote the advancement of all women while drawing on the particular legal expertise of each of the firm's women attorneys to connect with other women leaders throughout New Jersey and New York. The **Forum** hosts, attends and sponsors various educational, charitable and social activities geared toward women in business and leadership roles, including:

The 2ND Annual Fall Festival of the Arts Coming in October 2008

The **Forum** is comprised of all the women attorneys in the firm:

Christina Boulougouris
Melinda F. Bramwit
Kathleen Cavanaugh
Martha N. Donovan
Kerry A. Duffy
Mia D. Falls
Rikki L. Field
Alison L. Galer
Andrea S. Glaser
Jeanne M. Hamburg
Christa Hildebrand
Deanna L. Koestel
Jeralyn L. Lawrence
Marion K. Littman
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Melissa A. Peña
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Annmarie Simeone
Christine D. Socha
Lisa Stein-Browning
Haekyoung Suh
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